

RAJYA SABHA

*** SUPPLEMENT**

TO

SYNOPSIS OF DEBATE

(Proceedings other than Questions and Answers)

Thursday, February 08, 2024/ Magha 19, 1945 (Saka)

FAREWELL TO THE RETIRING MEMBERS

*** SHRI RAVICHANDRA VADDIRAJU:** Firstly, I express my sincere thanks to Shri Kalvakuntla Chandrashekar Rao, the first Chief Minister of Telangana and Party leader of BRS (Bharat Rashtra Samithi), who will remain forever in the hearts of the people of Telangana. I also thank him for nominating me to the Rajya Sabha. As a member of this Standing Committee on Petroleum and Natural Gas, I was able to solve some problems. For this, I would like to thank the Committee Chairman, Shri Ramesh Bidhuri and all the fellow members of the Committee. I am thankful to the Government for the Sammakka Sarakka Central Tribal University in Telangana. Many of the assurances made during the bifurcation of the State are still pending. I humbly appeal the Government to implement the assurances and also to give national status to some projects like Railway Coach Factory, Bayyaram Steel Factory, etc.. I also thank all the other Members of the Rajya Sabha. I wish that the retiring Members be re-elected and I too wish to be re-elected to this august House.

DR. AMAR PATNAIK: I stand before here today to bid farewell to this esteemed House, it is with a profound sense of gratitude and humility to the people of the State, to you, Sir, to my Leader, the President of Biju Janata Dal, the Chief Minister of Odisha, Shri Naveen Patnaik and particularly, the people of my State whom I have had the honour to represent for the past four and a half years. Hon. Chairman, Sir, after spending 28 very enriching and satisfying years in the Civil Services, I chose to join politics with the aim of serving the poor and the downtrodden. Politics has provided me a direct path to more effectively present policies in favor of the poor and the underprivileged in the Parliament of India. During my tenure of four years and nine months as an MP, I have learned from my seniors and juniors that the pursuit of knowledge never ends. I have not only spoken on many bills and topics, but I have also raised many issues related to Odisha, ranging from farmers, special category status, giving special protection to Tribals, and various types of connectivity in Odisha. Together we have debated, discussed and sometimes even disagreed. But, it is always with the best interests of our great nation at heart. Now I am bidding farewell to this respected assembly and I express my heartfelt gratitude to all the members.

***This Synopsis is not an authoritative record of the proceedings of the Rajya Sabha.**

*** Spoke in Telugu.**

SMT. VANDANA CHAVAN: Sir, for someone like me who had not even aspired to enter the political arena, it has been a very fulfilling journey in the last thirty years. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to our stalwart leader Shri Sharad Pawar, whose vision of empowering women drew me into this field. I am really grateful to him and my party, due to which I was able to make a small contribution in nation building and I also got to learn a lot. I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who has been extremely cordial in the conduct of this House and I feel very proud to be a part of this House. I would like to thank all my colleagues who have provided me guidance and advice from time to time for better performance. I am also grateful to my family who has always stood by me through thick and thin. Lastly, would really like to see that there is better coordination between the Treasury Benches and the Opposition, and that every criticism is taken as a piece of viewpoint, which is the essence of democracy.

SHRI JAVED ALI KHAN: Honorable Chairman, former MPs face some pains after retirement. For example, after retirement, one has to stand in line at the counter with one's ID card for railway reservation. Railway reservation facility should be provided to Ex MPs over telephone. When Piyush Goyal ji was the Railway Minister, he had started an online system for MPs and ID of all MPs and ex- MPs was created. But that online service has not started yet. I request that if you cannot provide facility on telephone, so at least provide online facility to ex-MPs and members. Secondly, open a counter somewhere in Parliament House Annexe, for ex-MP's CGHS bills, where all the bills can be exchanged, and our emergency certificates etc. can also be obtained from there. My third and last point is that, please provide a desk or appoint an officer in the Secretariat to provide for accommodation of ex-MPs coming to Delhi, by contacting whom the ex-MPs can avail the facilities of Western Court here.

SHRI HARNATH SINGH YADAV: Honorable Chairman, while expressing my gratitude to everyone in this sacred temple of democracy, today on the occasion of farewell, I would like to express some of my feelings. Political norms and traditions have no value anymore in the political field which can prove to be quite fatal for democracy and the country. Apart from this, I believe that respecting one's mother tongue is the honor of the country and hence I have tried to raise my voice in the House from time to time to adopt all the mother tongues of the country including Hindi language in every sphere of life. Sir, I would like to take this opportunity to express the feeling of the present and ex-MPs of both the Houses that the ex-MPs had the facility to sit and meet in the Central Hall of the old Parliament House, but this facility is not available in the New Parliament House. Today ex-MPs are not allowed to enter the New Parliament building. This situation is extremely painful, and also seems to be contrary to dignity. I would like to request through you that the Honorable Prime Minister will definitely take pains to take some positive action on this problem.

SHRI ABIR RANJAN BISWAS: Sir, first of all, I thank my party and my leader, Ms. Mamta Banerjee from the bottom of my heart for this greatest opportunity of making me a part of this Parliament and for my journey of six years in all spheres of life. It has been one of the greatest experiences learning from great and distinguished people who have come here since. I consider myself very fortunate because I had the privilege of serving in both the Parliaments – the old and the new. Sir, I am very grateful to all the MPs of this House, all the officers and staff of this Parliament, because everyone has always been helpful, cooperative and polite. 68 honorable members are retiring today. New

members will come which will once again infuse new energy into this House. I am sure that those retiring today will, as patriots, work for the interest of this great nation.

LET. GEN. (DR.) D.P. VATS (RETD.): I am a medical educationist. I am still a consultant to Maharaja Agrasen Medical College. The Indian Medical Council remained a hindrance in the spread of medical education. I was not aware that Modi ji would make me press the button to repeal it and I would speak on this issue in the Parliament. I also came to you with the issue of Khap Panchayats. I was not even aware that you would be my immediate boss. Things didn't turn out as my wish but it has been better than that. Being a doctor, I want to say that genetically we are the same from Kabul to Kanyakumari. I want that like Section 370, Section 371 should also be removed. Every Indian must have freedom to work anywhere and settle down anywhere. Like Europe, may this also happen someday for the people of our region, which includes India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

SHRI KAILASH SONI: It is a matter of great fortune for any citizen of India to reach the highest level of democracy. For public concerns, there was no jail left in Madhya Pradesh which I have not seen. We are witnessing all the objectives with which we came into politics being fulfilled during our tenure of 9 years. The political scenario has changed. Politics has moved away from slogans and has become issue based. Loknayak Jaiprakash Narayan ji had a dream that nothing would happen by changing governments, the systems must be changed with zero tolerance on corruption.

SHRI VIJAY PAL SINGH TOMAR: I want to thank the leaders of all parties, as I have one thing or the other from them. I was born in the house of a small farmer. I had no intention of entering politics. I came into politics with the inspiration of Chaudhary Charan Singh ji. We used to say that ethanol should be made from sugarcane, not from sugarcane juice and it should be mixed with petrol. We saw that dream come true. Many problems of farmers have been solved in the last years. I'm carrying a little pain today. We used to ask why the farmer of Baghpat cannot go to Sonipat and sell his paddy? Those restrictions should be removed. For this, many committees were constituted in the last 20 years. Laws were made by inviting all the stakeholders, but those laws had to be withdrawn. The Prime Minister said one sentence that in the interest of the country, we are withdrawing these laws. We had made these laws in the interest of farmers.

SHRI SUSHIL KUMAR MODI: I consider myself fortunate that I have got the opportunity to be member of all the four Houses of the country. I have been MLA three times. I Was Lok Sabha member once. I was the Leader of Opposition in Bihar Legislative Assembly for 6 years and the Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Council for almost 6 years. I have also had the opportunity to work with Shri Nitish Kumar as the Deputy Chief Minister of Bihar for almost 12 years. No man can work in politics for his whole life, but if he wants, he can work in the social sector for his whole life. I express my resolve that I will remain a social worker till the last moment of my life. I have a small suggestion that just as the President's address is given in the presence of members of both the Houses, similarly the Finance Minister's budget speech should also be given in the joint session of both the Houses.

SHRI SYED NASIR HUSSAIN: I have come to the Rajya Sabha as a member of the opposition party. We have seen that the Agenda of the Government is presented in the form of Bills in the Parliament. The Opposition should raise all such issues of national interest which do not come in the form of Bills. Especially those issues which are uncomfortable for the government. Be it the issue of unemployment, be it the issue of

inflation, be it the issue of poverty, be it the issue of GST or be it the issue of Manipur. We tried our best to raise all these issues under different relevant rules. We got the opportunity to debate those issues. We had to be a little aggressive at times.

SHRI KUMAR KETKAR: As a journalist, I have covered the Parliament Sessions from the Press Gallery. What I saw as a journalist was completely different from what I felt as a member of the Rajya Sabha. I have never seen such polarization of hatred and *Nafrat* in my entire journalistic career. I did not like this atmosphere. I witnessed humiliating approach and heard humiliating statements and comments. I hope that gratitude will be shown to our legendary leaders in the new Lok Sabha or Rajya Sabha.

SHRI RAJMANI PATEL: I came into politics as a member of a small farming family. I served with the spirit of service, considering service as my gift. Always struggled for the rights of the poor, Backward, Dalits and farmers by becoming their voice. Considering this struggle, our party blessed me and got a chance to become a member of this House. Before coming to Parliament, we had some dreams. Seeing the temple and House of the old democracy, seeing its proceedings, we used to dream of going to this House, where we will see the government of the people, by the people, working for the people. Sir, if instead of being a government of the people by the people, it starts working for some people, then a question mark definitely arises. Sir, here even dreams are broken, efforts are also made to suppress self-esteem and respect. Whether I am in the House or not, wherever I am, I will continue to fight for justice.

DR. L. HANUMANTHAIAH: I have given my best to this House to the best of my ability and I have learned many things from my experience in this House. Despite ideological differences, there are many good people here irrespective of party lines. People here have always appreciated the good work of any member. And I am one who has enjoyed the love of many Members of this House. I must remember Former chairman of the House Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu. Whenever you spoke on any topic he would comment. He used to appreciate or improve as you are doing now. I was thinking that this House will definitely become the voice of the deprived. It will solve the problem or it will take care of the issues because it is the apex body of the country. I am deeply disappointed by many of the issues raised in this House. The same were very serious issues. Life of crores of people is involved in it. The ruling Governments have not paid any attention to them. That's why I'm seriously concerned. I still request the House that whatever issues are raised in this House, the same should be addressed with full priority and sincerity.

DR. ANIL JAIN: I have been a student of Lucknow Medical College. When I studied, my medical college was one of the best medical colleges in the world. I have spent my golden period there. The six years of my parliamentary life, many of our dreams have truly been transformed into reality. We have seen the removal of Article 370, the removal of Article 35A, the merger of Kashmir. We have seen the abolition of Triple Talaq and we have seen the beginning of sisters getting their rights. We have seen the laws made during the colonial era being abolished. We have seen the dreams of poor people being fulfilled in this country under the leadership of the Honorable Prime Minister. There has been no incremental change in this country, but transformational changes after 2014. This has not brought changes in the lives of lakhs or two lakhs of people, but has brought changes in the lives of crores of people.

SHRI RAKESH SINHA: Honorable Prime Minister has used a very good word for the House. I have taught political science for more than two decades. I think this term

will become a part of political science. He said that the Living University, in fact in a parliamentary democracy, which the Honorable Prime Minister has called a Living University, gives rise to a system in which, in Parliament and outside the Parliament, people get trained and bring about a change that will impact the future generations and will open new avenues. The construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya is the biggest important change. This brought an end to the struggle that had been going on for a long time and we saw a new era being created in the House and the message of Lord Buddha becoming true that the republic which discusses as well as debates and where the House works continuously, that republic can never be defeated.

SHRI G.V.L. NARASIMHA RAO: I have raised issues of public concerns and problems of the State of Andhra Pradesh in every single opportunity that I got in this House. I helped people during Covid and worked for Backward Classes in Uttar Pradesh region.

SHRI SAMIR ORAON: In my journey from a tribal village in Jharkhand to becoming a part of the Upper House of this country, I received the support and guidance of all the senior leaders for which I am grateful. During my tenure, I have seen the creation of new history by the abrogation of Article 370, construction of Ram Temple, removal of old laws including Matri Shakti Vandan Bill for women's rights.

SHRI AHMED ASHFAQUE KARIM: I got the opportunity to sit in this House with many senior and experienced people like Manmohan Singh ji, Venkaiah ji, from whom I learned a lot and gained a lot of experience. I believe that social justice and economic justice complement each other. Therefore, when there is economic justice, social justice will automatically take place.

SHRI BINOY VISWAM: This House of Elders is an integral part of Parliament. This is the temple of democracy. During my tenure, I raised the issue of the common people including workers, peasants and the downtrodden. I believe that the small parties represent an ideology and a cause.

SHRIMATI PRIYANKA CHATURVEDI: Every ending is the beginning of something else. The retiring MPs leave with a lot of knowledge, a lot of learning and they can impart some time to train and groom young leadership.

DR. FAUZIA KHAN: I wish 68 retiring Members from the depth of my heart for another beginning in life. Along with them, there is there is Jaya Bachchanji, who is friendly, encouraging, committed, highly experienced and Dr. Manmohan Singh, hon. former Prime Minister, who is known for abolishing the licence *raj* to speed up the economic growth. Vandanaji has been twice a Rajya Sabha Member and she has performed in an outstanding way in all her roles. The other women members who are retiring are Dr. Ameer Yajnik, Dr. Sonal Mansingh, Ms. Saroj Pandey and Shrimati Kanta Kardam. All these women have proved what women power is.

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY; THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION; AND THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES AND THE LEADER OF THE HOUSE (SHRI PIYUSH GOYAL): There are very mixed feelings today. On the one hand, there are very good memories associated with the retiring members, while on the other hand, there is some sadness too. We will remember many senior colleagues for their contribution in enhancing

the dignity of the Upper House and getting important laws passed. The Honorable Arun Jaitley, former Leader of the House, once said: 'One of the great strengths of this House is that we have learned to respect each other's opinion.' I think if we all share this spirit and if we move ahead with this, then all the people will play an important role in taking the country forward in the future. Many of the retiring MPs will also return, many new MPs will come. They will bring new ideas and experiences. Everyone's experience, their voice will grace this House. Different views of our MPs came to the fore through debates and discussions. Many friends were made and I think that this friendship will last for years and years. Different honourable members also showed their sensitivity, ensured that their great thoughts are put forward in different debates of this House. I believe that the way the Honorable Chairman has given opportunity to all of us and tried to run the House smoothly, I along with retiring members express our gratitude to him for his precious contribution and we hope that in future also the dignity of the Parliament will be maintained, the glory of the House will increase and in a healthy environment, with good open minds, open hearts we will continue the discussion further. Of the members who are retiring today, some will come back, some will serve the country in different ways, serve their party, and fulfill their hobbies. I also wish them all the best from my side. I pray to God to give them long life and may they all always get success.

GOVERNMENT BILLS

#(i) The Appropriation (Vote on Account) Bill, 2024

#(ii) The Appropriation Bill, 2024

#(iii) The Jammu and Kashmir Appropriation (No.2) Bill, 2024

#(iv) The Jammu and Kashmir Appropriation Bill, 2024, and

#(v) The Finance Bill, 2024

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE; AND THE MINISTER OF CORPORATE AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI NIRMALA SITHARAMAN): Sir, I move that the Bill to provide for the withdrawal of certain sums from and out of the Consolidated Fund of India for the services of a part of the financial year 2024-2025, as passed by Lok Sabha, be taken into consideration.

Sir, I also move that the Bill to authorise payment and appropriation of certain further sums from and out of the Consolidated Fund of India for the services of the financial year 2023-2024, as passed by Lok Sabha, be taken into consideration.

Sir, I also move that the Bill to authorise payment and appropriation of certain sums from and out of the Consolidated Fund of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir for the services of the financial year 2024-25, as passed by Lok Sabha, be taken into consideration.

Sir, I also move that the Bill to authorise payment and appropriation of certain further sums from and out of the Consolidated Fund of the Union Territory of Jammu and

[#] Discussed together.

Kashmir for the services of the financial year 2023-24, as passed by Lok Sabha, be taken into consideration. And,

Sir, I also move that the Bill to continue the existing rates of income-tax for the financial year 2024- 2025 and to provide for certain relief to taxpayers and to make amendments in certain enactments, as passed by Lok Sabha, be taken into consideration.

SHRI SANJEEV ARORA: Every Government since Independence has done whatever they thought was best and required, to give health care to the population of the country, especially the down-trodden. Health expenditure needs to go up vis-a-vis the percentage of GDP. In spite of CGHS, medical insurance and Ayushman, out of pocket expenses are almost 50 per cent and these are official numbers in India.

Sir, Ayushman Bharat is a good scheme. It is for the poor and downtrodden. But, the only thing is: Only 60 per cent, in the last five years, of the total Budget allocated has been spent. We need to spend more. We need to have more GDP growth, so that the Government hospitals can provide critical care treatment. That is the reason why I am speaking on the Finance Bill that there needs to be more expenditure of GDP on health.

Annually, 9-10 per cent of families, in India, are pushed to poverty because of higher healthcare expenses. So, my only request to the hon. Finance Minister is to increase the percentage of money spent on health for two reasons. Firstly, it will help the poor. Secondly, If we spend on R&D, we can produce affordable medicines here and save many lives. Apart from this, there is higher allocation of Budget at BE stage, it comes down during RE stage and the amount spent is much lower. So, my suggestion to the hon. Minister is that the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare be allowed to juggle funds between the departments. If one department cannot spend, the funds may be allowed to other department which is in need of it and have the capacity to spend. I want to say within the Health Ministry. That option can be given, because funds get lapsed.

SHRI RANDEEP SINGH SURJEWALA: Sir, whether it is the Appropriation Bill or the Budget, there is nothing for the farmers and farm laborers of the country. It seems that the government has turned its back on Mahatma Gandhi's India.

In the year 2016, the Prime Minister promised this country that he would double the income of farmers by 2022. He had also defined this by giving 50 percent profit on the cost to the farmer in future. He had said that he will give 50 percent profit on the farmer's seed price, diesel price, electricity price, labor cost, land rent. On February 21, 2015, this government gave an affidavit in the Supreme Court wherein it said that MSP (Minimum Support Price) cannot be fixed at cost plus fifty percent profit, because this will "distort" the market. The report of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) shows that in the last nine years from 2014 to 2021, more than one lakh farmers and farm laborers in this country were forced to commit suicide. According to the NCRB report published on December 14, 2023, 11,290 farmers and farm laborers committed suicide in 2022. NSSO report states that the daily income of the country's farmers is only Rs 27 and every farmer in the country has a loan of Rs 27 thousands.

The Government of the country cannot say in the House and outside the House that the Government does not have the money to waive off the loans of farmers and that too when the Government has written off loans worth 19 lakh 34 thousand rupees of bank defaulters. According to Agriculture Census 2015, whose report came in 2018, there are 14

crore 64 lakh farmers in the country. In the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi, the respected Finance Minister and others on behalf of the government said that 11 crore farmers were included, that is, if 11 crore farmers out of 14 crore 64 lakh were included on the very first day, then 3 crore 64 lakh farmers are missing. For the last time in the year 2023-24, the 15th installment of PM Kisan Samman Nidhi was given by the Honorable Prime Minister on November 14, 2023, 24 hours before the elections. It was said that 8 crore farmers will get Rs 18 thousand crore. You said more than 11 crores, now it has become 8 crores. So 3 crore 80 lakh farmers have disappeared. This means that 7 crore 40 lakh or about 7.5 crore farmers were left out of the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi. Now this number has to be reduced further. That is why the amount of PM Kisan Samman Nidhi which was Rs 75 thousand crore in the year 2020-21, now I don't know why, it has reduced to Rs 60 thousand crore in 2024-25. This Rs. 60 thousand crore will now be given to 12.5 crore farmers. If Rs 60 thousand crores are given to 12.5 crore farmers, then each farmer will get Rs 4,800 instead of Rs 6,000. Now, is the Kisan Samman Nidhi to be reduced from Rs 6,000 to Rs 4,800 and there is an intention to reduce the number of farmers also. In the year 2020-21, the total budget of the Agriculture Department was 4.41 percent of the Union Budget. In 2023-24, the agriculture budget was reduced to 2.57 percent of the total budget of the country, almost halved. In the last five years, the Modi government did not spend nearly Rs 1 lakh crore of the Agriculture Department's budget, but returned it back. According to government figures, every hour a farmer is forced to commit suicide, but we return Rs 1 lakh crore. There is no law to guarantee the minimum support price for the farmer, which we call MSP. The government does not buy farmers' crops at MSP. According to the Agriculture Ministry, in 2022-23, 1 thousand 68 lakh tonnes of wheat was produced and 187 lakh 92 thousand tonnes i.e. 17.59 percent was purchased at MSP. Similarly, 0.13 percent of oilseeds were purchased. Not even 1 percent of the farmer's crop was purchased by the government at MSP. In 2022-23, 0.43 percent of pulses were purchased by the government at MSP. 0.26 percent of jowar, millet, ragi and maize were purchased. If you leave the farmer at the mercy of market forces, then where will the farmer go, how will the farmer live. The government cannot buy the entire crop, but will the government buy 0.43, 0.17 percent of my crop, that is why they said that we have brought Market Intervention Scheme. The revised estimate of this scheme for 72 crore farmers in 2023-24 was only Rs 40 crore. If the price of a farmer's crop falls in 2024-25, then you have kept one lakh rupees in the Market Intervention Scheme. I will also respectfully tell the respected Finance Minister that this needs to be changed, otherwise the farmers of this country will continue to sell their crops at throwaway prices and commit suicide.

PM Fasal Bima Yojana, which is discussed here, has also now become a private insurance company profit scheme. Between Kharif 2016 and Kharif 2022, insurance companies, which run crop insurance schemes, have earned Rs 40 thousand crore profit. Premium paid to him - Rs 1,59,132 crore and farmer got claim - Rs 1,19,314 crore. On one hand, we appeal to the farmer to give six thousand rupees every year, but we take out Rs 25,000 per hectare from the farmer's pocket as tax every year. By increasing excise duty on petrol and diesel, this government has earned Rs 30 lakh crore from the people of this country in nine years. For the first time in this country, there will be 5% GST on fertilizers, 12% GST on farmer's tractor, 12% GST on farmer's farming equipment, 18% you did not give a single penny to the sanitation workers in 2023-24 and 2024-25.

DR. AMAR PATNAIK: I would like to compliment the Government and the Finance Minister for exercising fiscal prudence and not being drawn into populist pressures in view of the impending Lok Sabha elections.

Increase in capital expenditure by 11 per cent, a research fund of Rs.1 lakh crore, the new urban housing scheme for the middle class, withdrawal of petty direct tax demands, making PMJAY more inclusive by including ASHA and Anganwadi workers and helpers, promoting vaccination and also providing free vaccination against cervical cancer are all steps in the right direction. While debt financing is common for a growing economy, India's current public debt-to-GDP ratio stands at a high of 81 per cent of which approximately 57 per cent belongs to the Central Government and the balance to the States. Even though fiscal deficits have been kept under a tight leash following a glide path, a recent IMF report raised concerns about the long-term sustainability of India's debts. I am happy that Interim Budget has recognised this and has estimated less borrowings in 2024-25 compared to 2023-24 from 15.5 lakh crores to 14.13 lakh crores. I think, a separate committee should be set up to engage with this issue in greater detail. There is a need to hasten pending GST reforms of upgrading the GST network to prevent fake supplies and fraudulent claims of Input Tax Credit, explore the possibility of taxing new emerging technology-backed digital platforms that host online games, private virtual digital assets by way of Government regulations and similar such initiatives, and exploring the possibility of non-tax revenue from user charges on various UPI applications, securities and capital market transactions. My second point is on subsidy administration. There is an urgent need for a revision in the policy pertaining to two of the highest subsidies costs of the exchequer, which is the fertilizer subsidy and the food subsidy. Though India leads globally in average in several crops, our productivity is low compared to the global average in these crops and it has, in fact, been declining continuously despite increasing use of chemical fertilizers and a fatter subsidy bill as a consequence.

Imbalanced use of nutrients, deficiency of micro and secondary nutrients and depletion of soil organic carbon due to overuse of fertilizers are some of the prime reasons for reducing yield. There has to be a long-term plan to phase down use of chemical fertilizers over a fixed period of time. In the immediate term, in order to address the rising import dependency on urea, the GST on raw material for fertilizers ought to be reduced to incentivise domestic production of the same. With respect to the food subsidies, I highly recommend diverting them from mainstream crops like wheat and paddy to coarse grains like millets, which would reduce groundwater usage, improve the soil regime and empower the tribals too, as millets are largely grown by tribals. It will lead to the transfer of subsidies to tribals. A national plan should be prepared for gradual implementation of the above strategy.

As far as inflation is concerned, approximately 40 per cent of agricultural produce in India is wasted. Thus, it is an apt time to implement post-harvest 'farm-gate to market' end-to-end integrated cold chain systems and processing facilities alongside increasing investment in climate-resilient agricultural practices.

SHRI AYODHYA RAMI REDDY ALLA: The Finance Minister, Shrimati Nirmala Sitharaman outlined a vision for a prosperous India, harmonising with nature, modern infrastructure and leveraging the trinity of demography, democracy and diversity. The Budget, rooted in the four pillars, seeks to establish macro-economic stability, drive capital expenditure for infrastructure, empower the poor youth, women and farmers and foster job creation. The effort inspires us, but achieving it necessitates recognizing regional realities. The Finance Minister has allocated Rs. 9,138 crores for railway projects in Andhra Pradesh, which is very commendable. The commitment demonstrated through a total investment of Rs. 68,000 crores underscores the Government's dedication for

enhancing the rail infrastructure. It is concerning to note the absence of any mention regarding the operationalization of the South Central Railway Zone. I urge the Government to expedite the operationalisation of this Zone at the earliest. The PM Gati Shakti Scheme aimed to transform India's infrastructure and logistics sector by streamlining planning and execution of projects to reduce logistics costs needs to put more focus on it. I would urge commissioning of more Gati Shakti Cargo Terminals in Andhra Pradesh with more focus in the current Budget. The Interim Budget maintained existing tax slabs but introduced an income tax remission scheme under Section 87A, aiming to alleviate the tax burden for those earning between Rs.5 lakh and Rs.7.5 lakh. However, Rs.12,500 relief is inadequate amid rising living costs. Despite Andhra Pradesh Government appeals, NFSA excludes almost 1.47 crore rice cardholders. We urge the Central Government to re-examine the methodology and include these deserving individuals in the scheme, ensuring food security for all citizens of our State. We want the Government to put focus on the Central Agricultural University for Andhra Pradesh. Also, put focus on Polavaram Irrigation Project. For that, further funding certainly needs to be given. For that, Revised Cost Estimate needs to be looked into. Andhra Pradesh has best potential for aqua industry. For that, investment needs to be looked at. Spending on health and education needs to be improved.

SHRI A. D. SINGH: The Defence Budget is only 1.89 per cent of the GDP. I would request the hon. Finance Minister that at least we should spend four per cent of the GDP on defence so that we can quickly modernise our Army, Navy and Air Force for the security of the country. The Government is laying border roads of 1 km or 2 km or 5 km length near Indo-China Border. The money allotted to the BRO is only Rs.6,500 crore which I find is too little. In the year 2022-23, all of a sudden, the investment in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir rose to Rs.2,153 crore from Rs.500 crore. So, we would like to know where this money is being spent. Another thing is regarding Kisan Samman Nidhi which is about Rs.6,000 for the farmers. At least Rs.24,000 per farmer should be given so that they know that they have some sort of money from the Government. 29 labour laws have been amalgamated into four Labour Codes but they are not implemented because the rules are not there. The total liability of the Centre has more than doubled from Rs.90.84 lakh crore to Rs.183.67 lakh crore between 2018-19 and 2024-25. According to the International Monetary Fund data, the Government debt, that is, combined domestic and external liability of both the Centre and the States, is in excess of 80 per cent of India's GDP. During UPA regime, debt -to-GDP ratio fell to a low of 66.4 per cent in 2010-11; it rose gradually to 66.7 per cent in 2013-14 and 70.4 per cent in 2018-19. During the current NDA regime, debt-to-GDP ratio rose to 88.5 per cent in 2020-21 at its peak. So, the country is under heavy debt. Each and every citizen has a huge debt on his head.

SHRI ELAMARAM KAREEM: In the Budget, there is the Minister's rhetorical exercise to hide the collapse of the economy despite claims of a 50 per cent increase in average income and moderate inflation; the ground truth reveals a different narrative characterized by soaring prices of essential goods and widespread unemployment. According to the parameters of the BJP Government, it has to be said that Pakistan is better than Finland. In this Budget, the 60 crore strong workforce of India did not find a place in this Budget. This is pro-corporate Budget and all our Public Sector Undertakings are to be handed over to the corporates. The allocation for farming sector has drastically reduced. The allocation for agriculture sector in 2022-23 was Rs.4,68,290 crores. In 2024-25, it is Rs.3,63,944 crores. The total subsidy in 2022-23 was Rs.5.7 lakh crores. In 2024-

25, it is Rs.4.09 lakh crores. Food subsidy in 2022-23 was Rs.2.72 lakh crores. In 2024-25, it is Rs.2.05 lakh crores.

DR. M. THAMBIDURAI: Both the Central Government and the State Government are taxing nowadays. The common man is suffering in Tamil Nadu. Whatever the DMK promised in their election manifesto, they could not fulfil and are sidelining the people. Take for example, the flood situation that took place. Hon. Finance Minister visited and hon. Home Minister visited. Then, DMK MPs met the Home Minister. They are satisfied, they are going to get money. Now, in the media, they are telling that the Central Government has not allocated it. I want to know from the Central Government: Have they allocated any funds for relief or not? Recently, the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu visited Spain. He said Rs.3,000 crores are coming as investment. I want to know from the Central Government what are the things going on in Tamil Nadu.

SHRI JAWHAR SIRCAR: The growth of GDP under the UPA's tenure had been over 8 per cent, 8.1 per cent. The growth of GDP under this Government in the last nine years has been just 5.5. This year, it may reach a very high level of 7.3 per cent but it does not destroy the averages. We need to be clear about statistics instead of misleading the people. This is the Government that lives on debt. In 2019, it was heartening to see that the Government made a pledge that we will keep fiscal deficit within three per cent of GDP. Last year, it was 6.4 per cent, double of 3 per cent. The total debt burden of India stands at Rs. 164 lakh crores, domestic debt, and I am not even including the foreign debt. It is Rs. 164 lakh crores which means that every Indian has a debt of Rs. 1.17 lakh. This Government has put this burden on the people of India. You can reach a GDP of \$5 trillion. We should reach a GDP of \$5 trillion but not at the cost of such heavy borrowing. The quantum of borrowing is exactly the size of the Budget ten years ago. On taxation, we are one of the lowest tax countries. I am not suggesting that go on increasing the tax on the common citizens. The common citizens are already burdened not only with taxation but with GST. Foreign Direct Investment has fallen from 3.5 per cent of GDP in 2007-08 to one per cent of the GDP now. We are surviving on remittances of Indian workers and Indian intellectuals abroad. It has reached about 125 billion according to me. Our problem is, our tax to GDP ratio is much too small for a good Welfare State. I am not much in favour of Wealth Tax, it is a regressive tax. The States are being continuously deprived. I want to mention that an official of the Government, of NITI Aayog has said in writing that against 42 per cent devolution to the State in 2014, he was asked to cut it down by 10 per cent. Food subsidy has been curtailed by 3.3 per cent this year. This year, fertilizer subsidy has been cut by more than 10 per cent. Expenditure on education, health, Awaas and NREGA has been reduced. The capitalist class has been able to give only 10 per cent of the GDP, and the government is spending money on them. In every sector, there has been a reduction.

SHRI BINOY VISWAM: The country has the right to ask everybody in the Government about various guarantees. For instance, food subsidy has been curtailed. For the agricultural sector, all the benefits are curtailed. The fertilizer subsidy has been cut. The expenditure on common man's health care has been cut. This is a Government that always forgets the rights of the workers and the poor. On 16th February, the country will witness a bandh by the rural poor. On the same day, a strike will be there, by the workers of all sectors of the industry. That means the country is on a revolt. The entire country has come together to fight against the norms and rules of the Modi-led Government. This Government is not for India's unity. Kerala is often being treated in a

very bad way. Our rights are being taken off. We are a part of India. And for that right, we demand our share from Government of India.

DR. ASHOK KUMAR MITTAL: India has become the fifth largest economy in the world, which is commendable and every Indian is proud of it. While presiding over the Indian Science Congress, the Hon'ble Prime Minister gave a new slogan to the country “Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan, Jai Vigyan, Jai Anusandhan”. Our Hon'ble Finance Minister said during the budget speech that we have progressed in science and technology. But only 0.7 percent of GDP is being spent on this sector. If the expenditure on this is increased a little, then perhaps we will be able to become the number one country in the world through research. We talk about Ease of doing Business and Ease of Living, but in the ranking of Global Remote Work Index we are at 108th rank. We talk about giving free ration to people and bringing people out of poverty but we are at 111th rank in the Global Hunger Index. We talk about happy farmers, but according to the National Sample Survey, 50 percent of the agri-holders are under debt. We talk about self-reliant India, but our imports from China have increased by 14 percent. Despite the number of taxpayers in India being 7 crores, it is only about 6 percent as against our GDP figures. The Foreign Direct Investment has increased, but the burden of foreign debt on the country is continuously increasing. We talk about “*Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas*”, but the real benefits are getting to the rich people. Our airports are not world class and are not even in operation. No flight has been operated from our Adampur airport in Jalandhar within three years. Still, I hope that India will emerge as *Vishwa Guru* and the credit for this goes to the indomitable courage of our poor men, farmers, youth and women.

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE; AND THE MINISTER OF CORPORATE AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI NIRMALA SITHARAMAN): So far, the 33 Members have spoken. I thank all the Members who have contributed to this debate. I will try to respond to as many Members who have spoken on the subject. We are trying about the Interim Budget of the Government of India and Supplementary. We are dealing with Demands for Grants for the current year 2023-24. We are also dealing with J&K's Budget, Interim Budget for a part year 2024-25. We are also talking about Supplementary Demands for Grants of J&K. The highlight of the Interim Budget is that we are indicating clearly the emphasis given on capital expenditure for revival of economy after COVID and to sustain this growth. We are working on creation of infrastructure and assets for common people. There is a difference between capital expenditure and expenditure on Capitalists. So, one should be mindful of distortion of finance terminology. Our Interim Budget is all set to have a multiplier effect on agriculture and all other spheres of economy. The route of spending money through the public investment in infrastructure gives us a greater return. It also creates employment and better public services. Following a standard global practice, even in this Budget, we have committed to spend about 17 per cent higher than even the current year's Revised Estimate. We are constantly monitoring the status of fiscal deficit as well.

We are also making sure that the fiscal deficit will be managed without hurting any of those projects that are important. For instance, for the Department of School Education and Literacy, the BE of 2023-24 had Rs.68,805 crores; and BE in the Interim Budget for the coming year is Rs. 72,474 crores. The Department of Health and Family Welfare had the BE of Rs. 86,175 crores in 2023-24; now, it is Rs. 87,657 crores. The Ministry of Women and Child Development had a BE of Rs. 25,449 in 2023-24; now, it is Rs. 26,092 crores for the BE of the coming year. Rs. 2,58,606 was the BE allocation for

Road Transport & Highways, whereas now, in the Interim Budget, it is Rs. 2,72,241 crores. For Railways, the BE allocation was Rs. 2,40,000 crores; now, it is Rs. 2,52,000 crores. For Defence, the BE was Rs. 1,71,375 crores; now, it is Rs. 1,82,241 crores. States were given funds with interest-free proposition We have retained that at Rs. 1,30,000 crores. States themselves would also invest in capital expenditure.

Now, I will talk about the 'Allocation for major flagship schemes.' For PM Kisan, Rs. 60,000 crores were allocated in the Budget Estimates, 2023-24. It continues to be Rs. 60,000 crores even now for 2024-25. For PM Awas Yojana (Rural), B.E. for 2023-24 was Rs. 54,487 crores, now it is Rs. 54,500 crores. For PM Awas Yojana (Urban), B.E. for 2023-24 was Rs. 25,103 crores, now it is Rs. 26,171 crores. Allocation for Jal Jeevan Mission was Rs. 70,000 crores in the Budget Estimates, and now it is Rs.70,163 crores. Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, the MNREGA, was Rs. 60,000 crores in BE 2023-24 and now it is Rs. 86,000 crores in 2024-25 BE. Gram Sadak Yojana, which was of Rs. 19,000 crores is kept at Rs. 19,000 crores. Samagra Shiksha, which was Rs. 37,453 crores is now Rs. 37,500 crores. PLI Schemes was Rs. 8,965 crores and now it is Rs. 16,021 crores. So, no major flagship Scheme has been curtailed nor have we reduced the allocation.

This is the second and the final batch of Supplementary for this year, 2023-24. Rs. 3,000 crores go for nutrient-based subsidy scheme for P&K fertilizers. Defence Services get Rs. 13,548 crores. The Department of Economic Affairs gets Rs. 5,000 crores. That is for transfer to Senior Citizens Welfare Fund. I just want to highlight the Jammu-Kashmir Interim Budget and also the Supplementary Demands for Grants. Their BE for total 2024-25 is Rs. 1,18,728 crores. The Central Government will provide Rs. 41,751 crores to the Government of Jammu and Kashmir for the year 2023-24 – and that is the current year – and Rs. 37,278 crores in the year, 2024-25, as assistance to the Union Territory. Their Supplementary Demands for Grants is Rs. 8,713 crores, for repayment of debt and power procurement.

The main feature of the Finance Bill is that there are certain changes to the TCS regime, the Tax Collection at Source regime, which we have made in the Finance Act of 2023. Some changes were announced through a Press Release, as a matter of clarification, on 28th June, 2023 regarding the remittances under the Liberalized Remittance Scheme (LRS), and on sale of overseas tour packages or travel program packages. In line with the announcements made, amendments have been proposed in the Finance Bill. Certain startups are eligible for some tax benefits if they are incorporated before 1st April 2024. The period is proposed to be extended by one year, i.e. till 1st April 2025. Similarly, for units located in the international financial services centre, some tax incentives were available, if these units were established before 31st March 2024, and this date is also being extended till 31st March 2025. Another change is also about the extension of limitation date of investments being made in India by the Sovereign Wealth Funds and Pension Funds. It is proposed to remit small, unverified demands up to Rs. 25,000, which relate to financial year 2009-10 and also earlier years. Some months ago, there was a lot of discussion about some tax claims being made that pertained even to 1962, 1970, 1980. Those issues are getting addressed in this. Similarly, the demands for 2010-11 of up to Rs. 10,000 are also proposed to be withdrawn. It will be a big relief for small taxpayers. These are the only changes which are being brought in in this Finance Bill and no tax rates are being amended. Some members have mentioned about the labour force. The labour force in the country has increased and for the rural areas, unemployment

rate has actually decreased from 5.3 per cent in 2017-18 to 2.4 per cent in 2022-23. Similarly, during the last five years, there is an increase of 13.7 per cent points in women labour force participation. Female enrollment in higher education has also increased by 32 per cent since 2014-15. Even as we talk of our Indian economy, there is more work to be done; I grant that. But there are significant progresses being made and we need to take cognizance of it. Some other member talked about 'Lakhpadi Didi' and women's participation in that. I want to highlight the fact that currently there are 83 lakh SHGs, with 9 crore women working across the country. In this interim Budget, I have announced to enhance the target for 'Lakhpadi Didi' from 2 crore women to 3 crore women. With Government assistance they will be trained to use many marketing techniques and the Government will work with them to make them part of GeM portal or market their goods through any of the ONDCs. A member had raised this question of retail inflation. I want to tell that it has declined. That member also spoke about Global Hunger Index. I want to submit humbly that Global Hunger Index is not a balanced approach to measuring hunger. I would like to humbly submit, as much as it is said that you cannot doubt those agencies, the very proposition of looking at data given by anybody, just as the data given by the Government of India, is that it is subject to peer verification.

That is the whole idea of observers, economists and statisticians looking at the data. Just as you treat Government data, nobody is beyond criticism. When I say that it is not a balanced approach to measure hunger, I am giving the reasons as to why I am saying so. The reasons can be rejected, but I would also want to place on record my point because all of us speak responsibly. The Global Hunger Index measures multi-dimensional nature of hunger by just relying on four indicators. It is not a comprehensive index as three of its four parameters focus only on children. The sample size of the study is only 3,000 households. As per NFHS survey, Infant mortality Rate is falling in the country. As per the NFHS-5, there has been a broad improvement in indicators relating to child health and nutrition. So, a study which we are doing is based itself on 6.37 lakh households. India has adopted a universal food security framework to protect its citizens from hunger through PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana. In the BE of 2024-25, Rs. 2.05 lakh crores have been given towards food security. This covers 80 crore beneficiaries who are getting this benefit, and it is definitely the responsibility of the Government. But sometimes we are criticized for that as well. Anything which is criticizing the Government is good enough. Anything which is actually telling the truth about the Government is rejected. This hypocrisy will not work. Furthermore, under the PM-POSHAN Scheme, in BE 2024-25, the amount has been increased to Rs.12,467 crores. There were questions about inflation, how we are managing it. I would just want to highlight that in order to enhance access to food, the Government has taken very critical steps. Bharat branded aata, dal, rice etc. are now available in the market at cheaper rates. People are buying these items at cheaper rates.

Tur and Urad dals are being imported under free category for imports, which has been extended till 31 March 2025. So that our market does not fall short of pulses. India also imported Masoor dal. The Government have taken the steps to contain inflation and give essential goods at affordable price, this is done through various means. It includes branded products which are marketed through NAFED and Mother Dairy like stores or through open market operations by releasing grains which are in the buffer stock or allowing imports to come into this country so that prices can be contained. on the matter of transfer to States, I just want to make it clear that Devolution, as is recommended by the Finance Commission, is hundred per cent followed by us. There is no way that any violation has happened. The Reserve Bank is monitoring it. Then, I come to Grants-in-aid

from Government of India, which has increased significantly from 2014 to 2024 to Kerala. Then, there is release under the Special Assistance to States for Capital Expenditure which we commenced from 2020-21 post-Covid. We are also having capital expenditure funding given to States which is for 50 years interest free. We are doing so, because the recovery and sustaining the growth of the economy is very high priority of the Government. This has been done for all states including Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

These are not data which I am releasing for the first time in this House. There are parliamentary questions as well as Budget documents which have breakdown by States as to how much every State got under Capital Expenditure. I want to dispel this myth that certain states are receiving less and some states are receiving more. I have no role to play in that. It is a number determined by the Finance Commission which is for tax devolution. Hon. Member, Randeep Singh Surjewalaji had quite a few issues on agriculture. I am sure that the Agriculture Ministry will be able to give him detailed point-by-point answers but some of the questions which he raised I would want to address. I will request the Minister for Agriculture to respond to him because those are issues which are very important and we need to answer it. The first question is about the PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi. There are several accounts that a farmer can maintain but there is just that one account which is enabled for DBT payment. The e-KYC was made mandatory during the fifteenth instalment release of the PM-Kisan Yojana and with this condition, over 8.12 crore farmers received the benefits.

During the Rabi marketing season 2014-15, for wheat, Rs.1,400 was the price per quintal. During the Rabi marketing season of 2023-24 the price for wheat was Rs.2,125 per quintal. The Government has constantly kept pace with the cost increase and kept giving higher MSP for farmers. During the Congress Government in Rajasthan there was no MSP based procurement in Rajasthan of bajra at that time. In the Karnataka Government, Yeddyurappa ji presented a separate Budget for farmers for the first time. There are also MSP prices for bajra, jowar, ragi, maize. Vizhinjam Port was given by the Congress people to Adani.

The motions for consideration of the Bills, were adopted.

Clauses etc., were adopted.

The Bills were returned.

P. C. MODY,
Secretary-General.

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